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THE MAGIC OF NARNIA
A Study of C. S. Lewis' Narnian Chronicles

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by
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INTRODUCTION

The world of Narnia fascinates and enchants me as if a magic spell has been cast over me from which I cannot escape. This compelling attraction that I feel for the world of C. S. Lewis' Narnia Chronicles has led to the writing of this thesis. In this paper, I hope to discover and explore the magical fascination that Narnia holds for me. To understand the magic web that C. S. Lewis has woven, we must understand something about him as a man, as a writer, and as a theologian. To understand this web from a literary view, we will have to explore both children's literature and fantastic literature to learn about their nature and value. When we have made these explorations, perhaps we will then have discovered the real magic of Narnia.

CHAPTER I
THE MAGIC OF FANTASY

Fairy land is a land of fantasy, a land where man longs to go, a land that man can often enter only through books. Fairy land is unreal, but it is a world of life, of beauty, and of joy. It is a land that is:

. . . wide and deep and high, and is filled with many things: all manner of beasts and birds are found there; shoreless seas and stars uncounted; beauty that is an enchantment, and an ever-present peril; both sorrow and joy as sharp as swords. In that land a man may (perhaps) count himself fortunate to have wandered, but its very richness and strangeness make dumb the traveller who would report it. And while he is there it is dangerous for him to ask too many questions, lest the gates shut and the keys be lost.¹

A fairy tale is a story that takes place in this land of enchantment. The stories of this land are as special as the land itself. It has been written that:

A love for fairy tales is as widespread, as age-old, and as deep-rooted as anything in human nature. Most adults recall with happiness their first excursions into the magic world of talking animals, enchanted princesses, giants and dragons and flying carpets.²

To understand the magic appeal of this land of fantasy and of

¹J. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," Essays Presented to Charles Williams (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1966), p. 38.

²Anne Thaxter Eaton, Reading with Children (New York: Viking Press, 1943), p. 65.

the stories that take place there, we must understand something about the role of fantasy in literature. A fairy tale is a fantasy. It is a piece of fantastic or improbable literature. It is a story that does not, and cannot, take place in our world. Fantasy as the broad, general category of literature includes fairy tales for children and for adults. It also includes other forms of imaginative literature such as science-fiction stories for adults and animal stories for children. Fantasy also includes myths and dream stories and other types of literature.

Fantastic literature is not unrealistic literature. A story of fantasy may be realistic in such aspects as life-like characters, dialogue, and various details, but improbable in that the situations could never actually happen in the life that we know. Fantasy is not meant to deceive and "Admitted fantasy is precisely the kind of literature which never deceives at all."³ People read fantastic stories knowing that they are fantasy and not actual history. A child knows that a fairy tale is a fairy tale and not reality. The enjoyment of a story is not dependent on the belief that the story is true or that it could be true.⁴ A child who

³C. S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism (Cambridge: University Press, 1961), pp. 67-68.

⁴Tolkien, op. cit., p. 62.

asks what kind of a story he is about to be read is not concerned with the truth of the story as truth, but if he should read the story as fiction or non-fiction. Lewis wrote that "in good reading there ought to be no problem of belief."⁵

A general definition of fantasy is a story which is strange, unusual, or astonishing.⁶ There are stories of fantasy for everyone's reading pleasure. The idea that fantasy and childhood are especially connected is a modern thought that does not seem to be based in fact: "Most of the great fantasies and fairy tales were not addressed to children at all, but to everyone."⁷ Lewis goes on to point out that fantasy is a normal part of literature that is not fashionable now.⁸ Tolkien maintains that there is no "essential connexion between children and fairy-stories," but that the association "is an accident of our domestic history."⁹ He shows how:

Fairy-stories have in the modern lettered world been relegated to the 'nursery', as shabby or old-fashioned furniture is relegated to the play-room, primarily because the adults do not want it, and do not mind if it is misused. It is not the choice of the children which decided this. Children as a class--except in a common lack of experience they are not one--neither like fairy stories more, nor understand

⁵Lewis, op. cit., p. 86.

⁶May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books (Chicago: Scott, Faresman, and Co., 1964, 3rd ed.), p. 337. (MHA classifies the Narnia books in this category.)

⁷Lewis, op. cit., p. 70. ⁸Ibid.

⁹Tolkien, op. cit., p. 64.

them better than adults do; and no more than they like many other things.¹⁰

Tolkien continues his argument by saying that:

If fairy-story as a kind is worth reading at all it is worthy to be written for and read by adults. They will, of course, put more in and get more out than children can.¹¹

Tolkien's point seems to be well taken. In general we must consider fairy tales and fantasy stories as a part of the whole field of literature that is written for every age and not just as a specific area of literature that is written only for children. At the same time that we keep this in mind, we must also remember that there are some books that are written specifically for children. It will be necessary to consider this type of literature after we have a basic knowledge of fantasy in literature.

Fantasy as a literary term means a "narrative that deals with impossible and preternaturals."¹² As a psychological term, fantasy can have both bad and good meanings. It can mean that one has abnormal delusions about reality or that one can live only in a dream world. Fantasy can also mean the normal day dreams that we all have and that we keep in a balance with the rest of our life. Good fantastic literature comes from and speaks to this part of the normal man. Fantasy

¹⁰Tolkien, op. cit., p. 58. ¹¹Tolkien, op. cit., p. 66.

¹²Lewis, op. cit., p. 50.

can be constructive and help someone to face reality but it can also be "carried to excess. It can be ill done. It can be put to evil uses."¹³ This happens when one writes fantasy without admitting that it is fantasy or when one is unable to distinguish between fantasy and reality.

J. R. R. Tolkien deals with fantasy in an interesting and unique way. Fantasy, to him, is "the making or glimpsing of other-worlds" which is "the heart of the desire of Faerie."¹⁴ Faerie makes these "visions of 'fantasy' effective."¹⁵ Fantasy is more than the art of creating. It is the "quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression, derived from the Image: a quality essential" to fairy stories.¹⁶ Fantasy involves an "arresting strangeness."¹⁷ Fantasy is then defended as a "natural human activity. It certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, nor obscure the perception of, scientific verity The keener and the clearer is the reason, the better fantasy will it make."¹⁸ There is logic and law in the world of fairy tales. Once a person is in the world of

¹³Tolkien, op. cit., p. 72.

¹⁴Tolkien, op. cit., p. 63.

¹⁵Tolkien, op. cit., p. 51.

¹⁶Tolkien, op. cit., p. 67.

¹⁷Tolkien, op. cit., p. 68.

¹⁸Tolkien, op. cit., p. 72.

Fantasy events happen in an orderly manner. The laws of magic and of fairy land are different from the laws of man's world, but they exist and are an important aspect of fantastic literature. Tolkien would deny that magic and fantasy are the same thing because in one sense fantasy deals with another world and not with magical, man-created changes in this world. Yet when we consider magic to be an enchantment, an attraction, or an "irresistible influence", we see that magic is a definite and an essential element in the world of fantasy.

Eaton speaks of a type of literature that is on the "borderline country of fantasy".¹⁹ This is the land that is neither wholly real or unreal, that land that is close to both reality and fantasy, and that land that is both reality and fantasy "at once".²⁰ It is the "land of betwixt and between".²¹ Stories of this land, due to their closeness to real life, are able to give a magical quality to the things that are "Close at hand but hidden from view" and are able to make the reader more aware of the world in which he lives.²² The Alice books are, according to Eaton, this type of book. George MacDonald's books such as At the Back of the North Wind

¹⁹Eaton, op. cit., p. 195.

²⁰Eaton, op. cit., p. 88.

²¹Eaton, op. cit., p. 89.

²²Ibid.

and The Princess and Curdie are also books in this classification. They are books that give "extensions of reality" rather than actual stories of another world. The Red Balloon is a modern addition to this type of literature. The little boy does not leave his own world but it becomes a magic world, an "extended" world, because of the unusual actions of the balloon. It is perhaps true that "There is more of a thrill in dwelling on the possibility of something unreal underneath the real than in reading the conventional fairy tale."²³

There are other classifications of literature which do not deal directly with reality and which can be basically grouped as fantasies. Myths and allegories are such literary types. An allegory is when the "immaterial realities are represented by feigned physical objects."²⁴ An allegory, which can have only one meaning put into it, is not as "high" a thing as a myth which is "a story out of which ever varying meanings will grow for different readers" at different times.²⁵ A man can put into an allegory "only what he already knows" but in a myth he puts "what he does not yet know and could not

²³Ibid.

²⁴W. H. Lewis, Letters of C. S. Lewis (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), p. 283.

²⁵W. H. Lewis, Op. cit., p. 271.

come by in any other way."²⁶ A myth is a story with its own value and which does not depend on its literary form or style. There is always a tone of graveness and awe in a myth. The reader remains distant from the characters and feels as if he is reading about another world.²⁷ Myths should lead to contemplation rather than to actual belief. Lewis pointed out that stories may be a myth to one reader but not to another since their mythical quality depends on the effect upon the reader.²⁸ Arbuthnot points out that myths are attempts to explain by stories and symbols the issues of man's existence. The creation stories in the Bible and in primitive religions are myths that attempt to explain the question of the origin of and meaning of man. A myth takes something such as death, which is one of the ultimate questions of man's life, and tries to explain it in an imaginative way as part of the universal order. Myths give a concrete body and form to the abstract forces in the universe and to the questions that confront man in his life.²⁹ Myths are hard for the modern, scientifically oriented man to accept since he usually associates myths with

²⁶Ibid. ²⁷C. S. Lewis, op. cit., pp.43-44.

²⁸C. S. Lewis, op. cit., p. 45.

²⁹Arbuthnot, op. cit., pp. 350 ff.

primitive religions and with superstitions. But there are modern myths today, such as Till We Have Faces by C. S. Lewis.

Fables are another sub-group in the general area of fantastic literature. A fable is distinct because it is a simple, short, and direct narrative that is written to teach and that contains "moral or spiritual wisdom." Abstract ideas, such as good and evil, are given a concrete form and character so that the reader will understand and remember them. The characters, usually animals who act human, take impersonal masks and are involved in an act that will teach a lesson of significant moral value.³⁰ Fables are not actually fairy tales although the types are close and both may include such things as talking animals.

Another type of fantastic story that is often confused with a fairy tale but which is quite different from a fairy tale is a dream story such as Alice In Wonderland. In such a story the action is taking place in a dream, not in another world. Through the Looking Glass is another example of a dream story. The Alice books have also been classed as nonsense stories where absurdity is the law of the land. It is true that things are absurd in Wonderland but there is a logical order in Wonderland once the rule of absurdity is accepted. Lewis wrote that "The logic of a fairy tale is as

³⁰Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 300.

strict as that of a realistic novel."³¹

It is clear that fairy tales are only one aspect of the broader field of fantastic literature. Fantastic literature in turn is only one aspect of the broader field of literature in general. Because of this, the standard criteria of good literature applies to fantastic literature, specifically fairy tales, as much as to any other type of literature. Unless a fairy tale is good as a work of literature, it cannot be a good fairy tale. A good piece of literature is more than adventure, entertainment, or the enjoyment that "grips" a person.³² A good story must be well written. It must be consistent and logical. It must be honest about its nature and its purpose. It should be made clear that fantasy is fantasy and not biography.³³ The theme, or idea, of the story should be adequate and complete with a lively plot, interesting and life-like characters. There should be a style where the words, ideas, and actions fit together with logic and clarity.³⁴ A good story or book should be able to give the "key to other minds" and should make the "unfamiliar

³¹C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds--Essays and Stories, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1961), p. 13.

³²C. S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism (Cambridge: University Press, 1961), pp. 91-92.

³³C. S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism, pp. 67-68.

³⁴Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 17.

come close" as it sheds new light on the familiar.³⁵ A good story can be read more than one time without loss of enjoyment or of any of the story's qualities, such as the quality of unexpectedness, because a good story is more than its plot and its action. The oldest type of fantastic literature is the folk story. The term folk tale includes fairy tales, but a folk tale can also be an animal story or a fable. A folk story is one that has been handed down as a part of the culture of the people. It is a story that uniquely belongs to that group of people. The origin of the actual fairy tale is buried in the history of the folk tale. The origin of both types of story is so lost in the confusion of history that their development will never be totally known or understood. All that we are able to conclude is that the fairy tale is very ancient and that the form of the fairy tale, as an element of folk literature, has been universally found wherever there is language. Tolkien has written that the history of the development of the fairy tale is "as complex as the history of the human language."³⁶ In Tolkien's view there have been three elements of significance in the origin and development of fairy tales. These elements are: 1) independent invention; 2) inheritance; and 3) diffusion.

³⁵Annis Duff, Bequest of Wings (New York: Viking Press, 1944), pp. 15-16.

³⁶Tolkien, op. cit., p. 49.

Of these three, invention is the most basic and important element in the history of the fairy tale although it would not seem to explain why many widely scattered fairy tales have similar details and stories. Diffusion involves borrowing in space, while inheritance involves borrowing in time. Invention deals with the real origin and source of the story, both in form and in content.³⁷ Tolkien compares the history of the fairy tale to a huge pot of soup, to which one keeps adding ingredients. The soup, which may be delicious, is often made up of many ingredients. Tolkien wrote that:

Speaking of the history of stories and especially of fairy-stories we may say that the Pot of Soup, the Cauldron of Story, has always been boiling, and to it have continually been added new bits, dainty and undainty.³⁸

It is now impossible to do more than generalize about the ancient origin of fairy tales. But we do know that in every culture there has been an ancient heritage of stories that we can call fairy tales. These stories may differ from culture to culture but the basic characteristics are the same and do not seem to change with either time or geographical distance.

The term "fairy" was not used in reference to this type of a fantastic story until the sixteenth century.³⁹ "Fairy"

³⁷Tolkien, op. cit., p. 50.

³⁸Tolkien, op. cit., p. 53.

³⁹Tolkien, op. cit., p. 41.

comes from the French word "fée" which means supernatural creatures of various kinds, not always small, who live in a different world. Stories involving a "fée" type of creature were popular at the court of Louis XIV of France.⁴⁰ Hans Christian Andersen, the Dane who was born in 1805, was especially creative in the modern history of the fairy tale. He not only retold and elaborated old stories, that had been a part of the tradition of folk lore and fairy tales, but told many entirely new stories in the fairy-tale manner and style. Because of this, it is right to call him the "originator" of the modern fairy tale.⁴¹ Arbuthnot indicates that it is Andersen who, to some degree, has inspired the modern writers of fairy tales and stories of fantasy such as Lewis Carroll, George MacDonald, Kenneth Grahame, and C. S. Lewis.⁴²

A fairy tale is not necessarily, or only, about fairies or supernatural beings but a fairy tale is any story that has "the element of magic, of enchantment, of unseen forces governing the course of events."⁴³ This definition covers the folk tales of primitive man as well as the fantastic

⁴⁰ Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 327.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Arbuthnot, op. cit., pp. 333-360.

⁴³ Duff, Op cit., p. 171.

stories created by the imagination of modern man. Another writer has said that a fairy tale is a story in which there is "something extra-ordinary - fairies, giants, dwarfs, speaking animals."⁴⁴ Tolkien has much to say about what a fairy tale is and what a fairy tale is not. It is interesting to study what he has to say about fairy tales as we read the Narnia books.⁴⁵ Lewis and Tolkien were contemporaries at Oxford and good friends. Both men wrote imaginative stories that have often been called fairy tales. It is clear that each man had a definite influence on the other man. Tolkien's work on fairy tales is considered a classic in its field and it seems wise to consider carefully his definition of a fairy tale. It is perhaps wise to use Tolkien's definition as a working definition for this paper. Once we have seen what he meant, and what others have meant, by the term fairy tale, we can decide if the Narnia books are or are not fairy tales. If they are not fairy tales, we can then try to discover what type of literature they are.

Tolkien says that the term fairy tale is often wrongly and loosely used and that many stories commonly thought to be fairy tales are actually another type of story. He says that

⁴⁴Eaton, op. cit., p. 75.

⁴⁵Lewis did not write his Narnia books until after Tolkien had written "On Fairy-Stories".

a fairy tale, which does not have to include fairies, is any story that at least touches on Faerie. A fairy tale is a story that takes place in the land, or comes near to, the land of Faerie. A story that does this may be either satire, adventure, morality, or fantasy in its basic purpose and format and still be a fairy tale. It may or may not include fairies. The purpose or background of the story is not important if the element of Faerie is present. The nature of Faerie is something close to magical but it is not the magic of the scientist or the magician. It is "the magic of a peculiar mood and power", the magic that is so real that it cannot be made the object of fun or satire.⁴⁶ Faerie is a quality that "cannot be caught in a net of words; for it is one of its qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible."⁴⁷ Most fairy tales are not about fairies but "are about the adventures of men in the Perilous Realm or shadowy marches" of the land of Faerie, where fairies have their being. Faerie as a land contains many things other than fairies and elves. It has seas and mountains, trees and animals, giants and mortal men when they are "enchanted".⁴⁸ Faerie finds its value in its operation and

⁴⁶Tolkien, op. cit., p. 43.

⁴⁷Tolkien, op. cit., p. 42.

⁴⁸Tolkien, op. cit., p. 42.

and existence not its end or its goal. Its value is partly in the satisfaction of the human desire to go beyond the limits of normal time and space and also to be able to communicate with other living things, such as bears and horses and trees. Tolkien maintains that: "A story may thus deal with the satisfaction of these desires, with or without the operation of either machine or magic, and in proportion as it succeeds it will approach the quality and have the flavor of fairy story."⁴⁹

To Tolkien, the mark of the true fairy-story regardless of its purpose, form or story, is "Joy"--the "sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth."⁵⁰ Joy, the denial of universal defeat, is not the same thing as escapism into an unreal world.⁵¹ It "is a sudden and miraculous grace; never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of dyscatastrophe, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance . . ."⁵² This "Joy", the joy of the "good catastrophe," of the sudden change of events, is the highest form of a fairy tale. This quality of joy, to Tolkien, is the distinguishing characteristic of

⁴⁹Tolkien, op. cit., p. 44.

⁵⁰Tolkien, op. cit., p. 83.

⁵¹Tolkien, op. cit., p. 81.

⁵²Ibid.

what is a fairy tale and what is not a fairy tale. But it would seem that in judging a fairy tale we must also remember the marks of a fairy tale such as "the element of magic. ." and the presence of "extraordinary" things such as giants and speaking animals. The two must be held in balance if we are to know what a fairy tale really is.

Many people feel that a fairy tale may be a harmful and dangerous thing for children to read. Some objections to fairy tales that lead to this view are that:

1. they teach violence and make children fearful;
2. they help children to escape from their real environment and responsibilities;
3. they may teach a child to be prejudiced about certain things, such as stepmothers;
4. they deal too much with death;
5. they teach things that are not Christian or that will confuse a child's belief.⁵³

There are elements of truth in what these arguments maintain, but these arguments are not sufficient reason to forbid a child to read a fairy tale. In regard to increasing a child's fears, we can agree that a child should not be encouraged to be afraid to the extent that it will harm him. But is it wrong

⁵³Duff, op. cit., p. 172.

for a child to have some fear? Children seem to want to be a bit frightened. Do a child's fears come from what he reads or are they perhaps instinctive? Children who do not read fairy tales have fears and few children seem to be really afraid that the dragon in a fairy tale will get them. They are more apt to be afraid of the big bully down the street than of the fairy tale witch. Lewis felt that the literature has little to do with the fears that a child has. It is also true that children should be taught that there are things in life that are fearful. Fairy tales show not only fearful violence, but also "in fairy tales, side by side with terrible figures, we find the immemorial comforters and protectors, the radiant ones; and the terrible figures are not merely terrible, but sublime."⁵⁴ In addition to fears, if they do teach them, fairy tales also teach courage and bravery. To put it another way, in the words of another author: "These stories are not didactic, but one after another shows that courage and simple goodness work their own magic in this world, that evil must be conquered even if it carries us to the gates of death, and that grace and strength are bestowed upon those who strive mightily and keep an honest, kindly heart."⁵⁵

It also seems a bit unlikely that a fairy tale could

⁵⁴C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds--Essays and Stories, p. 32.

⁵⁵Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 275.

shape a child's prejudice in the light of reality and real people. How could a child believe that all stepmothers are bad if the child knows a real one?⁵⁶ A fairy tale does recognize that killing, violence, and nastiness exist but they do not teach them as a means of conduct. In a fairy tale, justice is very strong. Death is acknowledged as part of reality but it is wrong to hide the fact of the reality of death from children. Tolkien makes the interesting point that a fairy tale shows the "burden" of deathlessness and can teach children that death is not a thing to be feared or avoided.⁵⁷

Two of the strongest objections to fairy tales are that they tend to give a child a distorted picture of the world, and that they tend to let the child escape from the reality of his life into a frustrating dream world. Lewis pointed out that realistic stories, school stories of "real life", are more apt to deceive children about reality than fairy stories are. A child knows instinctively that the fairy world is beyond his reach but he enjoys reading about it and thinking about it. He is happy in the act of desiring. But the child is apt to think that his own world is like the world of the realistic stories and he may try to be like the ever-victorious hero. When the child fails to achieve all his goals, he will

⁵⁶Duff, op. cit., p. 175.

⁵⁷Tolkien, op. cit., p. 81.

be disappointed and upset. But he will not be disappointed when he cannot get to Faerie. Realistic, possible but improbable, stories raise false expectations far more than a fantastic fairy tale does.⁵⁸

It is true that there are elements of escape in a fairy tale but it is also true that all reading is, to some extent, an escape from the reality in which we live. What must concern us is what it is to which we are escaping. Escape in reading is not necessarily the same thing as the escapism that is spoken of in such a derogatory tone. Escape through literature is not always a bad thing, if the motive for the escape and the place to which we are escaping are valid. There are many things in life from which we should escape. There are certain times when we must escape from reality for a period of time in order that we can return to it with acceptance and renewed courage. To the degree that a fairy tale helps us to do this and gives us pleasure, escapism into fairy land is a good thing.

The use of fairy tales has too often been restricted to bed-time readings for little children who have been well behaved. It is true that this is a valid use of fairy tales, but there are many other uses and values in fairy tales that

⁵⁸C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds--Essays and Stories, pp. 28-30.

are all too often ignored. Fairy tales have much to give that they have never been allowed to fully give. Fairy tales have often been misused and their value and enjoyment destroyed or corrupted. It is wrong to use fairy tales just to teach morality. The moral truth in a fairy tale stands on its own and it does not have to be pointed out or taught. Fairy tales, which children enjoy for themselves alone, can also give an understanding of different lands, customs, and times. A child who may never meet a Chinese will learn something about Chinese culture by reading a Chinese fairy tale.⁵⁹

It is obvious that fairy tales can do many valuable things for children. A summary of some of the things, abstract and concrete, that they can do for children is given in Reading with Children, by Eaton. In her view, fairy tales can help children because they can:

1. "cultivate the imagination" by letting a child share the emotions of other people;
2. "broaden a child's mental horizon" by taking him out of his own world;
3. "deepen a child's emotional experience" by letting him know joy and sorrow through the lives of others;

⁵⁹Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 284.

4. "satisfy a child's need for self-expression" by letting the child identify with the hero and do things, such as speak with animals and slay dragons, that he could not do in his own life;
5. "cultivate a sense of humor" since almost all fairy tales have funny and amusing things in them;
6. "without sermonizing, supply a very efficacious moral teaching" by making bad and evil things seem silly;
7. help to keep a child from the tendencies in modern life of being too sophisticated by producing excitement and adventure;
8. help to prepare the child for other types of good literature;
9. provide a chance to "absorb the flavor and atmosphere of other countries" in an enjoyable way by telling of cultures and countries.⁶⁰

There are many valuable things to recommend "fairy stories as a natural branch of literature . . . "⁶¹ and as a constructive part of a child's life. Fairy stories help to show a child "that there is a world outside himself and his

⁶⁰Eaton, op. cit., pp. 69-72.

⁶¹Tolkien, op. cit., p. 60.

own small affairs . . ."⁶² They offer the child fantasy, recovery of a clear view of the familiar life, escape which is not always a bad thing, and the consolation of a happy ending and the joyful life of the heart when things turn out well.⁶³ Fairy tales "open a door on Other Time" and give a time and a place where man can "stand outside" his own time and all time.⁶⁴ The symbols in a fairy tale can satisfy the human longings and desires and inspire man to do brave and heroic things.⁶⁵

Before we conclude this section on fantasy in literature, we must deal with the fact that fairy tales have been given a special place in the "nursery". Although fairy tales are not written only for, or enjoyed only by, children, these stories are associated with children's literature. Because of this association, we must consider children's books in general. We must first emphasise the fact that "there is no literary taste common to all children".⁶⁶ Children have different likes and dislikes just as adults do, although there are some general ideas about children's literature and about

⁶²Eaton, op. cit., p. 156.

⁶³Tolkien, op. cit., p. 66.

⁶⁴Tolkien, op. cit., p. 57.

⁶⁵Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 282.

⁶⁶C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds--Essays and Stories, p. 39.

children usually like that should be remembered. We must remember that "Children respond to what is fresh and original and honest".⁶⁷ A child demands that a book have "simplicity of speech, singleness of motive, directness of action".⁶⁸ For a child, examples do speak more loudly than words and because of that, the plot, the characters, and the events in a story are especially significant. Lewis points out that "children read only to enjoy".⁶⁹ A child will not read to increase his knowledge and his understanding. Because of this type of motivation, a book that is written for a child must be something that will interest him or provide him with amusement and enjoyment.

The best children's books are those that are written for fun, those that are written because there is a story that wants to be told or because the author likes to tell stories to children. Alice in Wonderland was first told by Lewis Carroll at a picnic to amuse a real-life Alice. The Wind in the Willows came from a series of bed-time stories that Kenneth Grahame told his son. C. S. Lewis wrote the Narnia Chronicles because he had a story that was haunting him and

⁶⁷ Ursula Nordstrom, "The Joyful Challenge," Saturday Review, L (November 11, 1967), p. 40.

⁶⁸ Eaton, op. cit., p. 137.

⁶⁹ C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds--Essays and Stories, p. 41.

that he felt he had to tell. Can it be said that the children stories that grow out of joy, love, and life are the good children's stories, the ones that survive, the ones that are reread again and again as adults?

It is unfortunate that the world today has come to equate the word "adult" with approval and goodness and the word "childish" with disapproval and inadequacies. "Childish" should not be a term of disapproval since there are "childish" qualities that all people should keep even when they are very old in years. All men should be able to maintain that "tireless curiosity, that intensity of imagination, that facility of suspending disbelief, that unspoiled appetite, that readiness to wonder, to pity, and to admire" the qualities that are natural in childhood.⁷⁰ We could say that if adult as a term of approval is the opposite of childish, senility is the greatest term of approval possible.⁷¹ No one would accept this idea. It can be said, then, that the word childish has a good connotation as well as a bad connotation. There are some childish qualities which we should want to outgrow because we are better off without them. Such qualities might be "weak muscles" and a lack of knowledge and experience.

⁷⁰C. S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism, pp. 71-72.

⁷¹C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds--Essays and Stories, p. 25.

If we do not outgrow these qualities, we are being childish in the bad sense of the word. Lewis has summarized this point by stating that:

Not to acquire a taste for the realistic is childish in the bad sense of the word; to have lost the taste for marvels and adventures is no more a matter for congratulations than losing our teeth, our hair, our palate, and finally, our hopes.⁷²

What we must also remember is that "The dates at which our various traits develop are not a gauge of their value".⁷³

What man wants to do then is to grow into adulthood rather than just to change into adulthood. Change means the substitution of one thing for another. In the light of this paper, change would mean the exchanging of a taste for adventure or fantasy in literature for biography only. Growth, as opposed to change, means the enrichment and additional pleasures and interests that come as we "grow" by keeping the old interests at the same time that we are exploring and adding new interests to our personality. In other words, growth into adulthood means that we can enjoy fantasy and fairy tales, as well as biographies. We can enjoy fairy tales more because, as adults, we can put more into them and take

⁷²C. S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism, p. 72.

⁷³C. S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism, p. 73.

more away from them into our own lives.⁷⁴

In one very real sense, we should now be able to say that fairy tales, and all fantastic literature, are written not just for children but for both adults and children. Each age will approach and react to the stories in different ways. The adults' wider range of experience will force him to view the fairy tale in a different way than the child's innocence will permit him to view the same story. The fairy tale will be valuable for both the child and the adult. As Lewis writes, "a book worth reading only in childhood is not worth reading even then."⁷⁵ It is true that "a childish story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story."⁷⁶

To write a story for children that is to be a good story means that the author must write to the children as equals, in the part of his being where he is their equal, without patronizing them or idolizing them.⁷⁷ He must write out of the area of his imagination which he does "share with children."⁷⁸

⁷⁴C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds--Essays and Stories, pp. 25-26.

⁷⁵C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds--Essays and Stories, pp. 38.

⁷⁶C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds--Essays and Stories, p. 24.

⁷⁷C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds--Essays and Stories, p. 33.

⁷⁸Ibid.

The author must realize that:

imagination, naked and exposed in the child, survives within the carapace of the adult. The child is not just the father of man, but his sibling, too, in that he survives alongside the adult, and as his Siamese twin. There are levels of playful libidinous unreality in all of us.⁷⁹

It is here, in the heart of man's imagination, that the best children's stories are born. Lewis points out that there is a "wrong" and a "right" way to write children's books. The wrong way to write a children's book is to view children as a distinct group and write with a motive of teaching a moral lesson or of giving the children what they want or need to hear. The right way of writing a children's story is because this literary form is the best one for the story that must be told. In the literary world of today with its narrow stress on social or psychological themes, children are the one market left for narrative literature.⁸⁰

After having discovered the basic characteristic of fantasy, fairy land, and good children's literature, we are perhaps now able to understand some of the magical appeal of fairy tales. It will now be our task to try to discover some of the magical appeal of C. S. Lewis. Without that, as well

⁷⁹Jonathan Miller, "Another Wonderland", New York Times Book Review, (Section 7, Part 11, May, 1967), p. 1.

⁸⁰C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds--Essays and Stories, p. 41.

as the knowledge of fantasy and fairy tales, we will not be able to discover the magical world of Narnia.

CHAPTER II

THE MAGIC OF C. S. LEWIS

The popularity of C. S. Lewis, the 20th century Christian apologist, seems to be growing rapidly today, several years after his death. His popularity among laymen in a world full of skepticism and disbelief has always been remarkable. Today Lewis' popularity is growing in an even more remarkable circle--among theologians and among the people who do not agree with him on issues of theology. These people now seem to find something in Lewis to appreciate. They find something of lasting value in Lewis although they would perhaps stand on the opposite side in a theological debate. His increasing popularity seems to be due to the realization of Lewis' merit as a writer, more especially as a writer of imaginative literature. Although people may find fault with his actual theological works such as Mere Christianity and The Problem of Pain, they still are able to see a value in his other writings. It seems to be Lewis' vivid and varied imagination that makes him so popular and respected today. His imagination expressed itself in books that are so lively and full of images and truth that people are drawn to them, first for the enjoyment of the stories and pictures and then for the content.

Through his imaginative method Lewis has opened the doors to Christianity for many people. He opens the doors to his type of orthodox Christianity, but his imaginative work can also lead people to a more liberal and critically freer Christianity than Lewis had. In this capacity, Lewis can be appreciated by almost all people--theologians, scholars, clergy, and laymen. As an imaginative writer, Lewis can even be appreciated by non-believers for his creative images, for his fascinating stories, and for his literary style. This increasing appreciation of Lewis as a writer is expressed in a quote by Chad Walsh:

. . . his more imaginative books will live on with full force and become a permanent part of the literary and religious heritage . . . In these books where his imagination has full scope he presents the Christian faith in a more eloquent and probing way than ever his more straight-forward books of apologetics could. These books are not for a day but for a very long time to come.¹

Lewis' Narnia Chronicles, to be specific, are becoming favorites among both the children for whom they were written and among adults. The attraction that these stories of the land of Narnia have for people of all ages is closely connected to the more general attraction that C. S. Lewis,

¹Jocelyn Gibb (ed.), Light on C. S. Lewis, (London, 1965), p. 116.

himself, has for various types and ages of people. The qualities that draw people to Lewis and to his writings can be seen clearly in the stories of Narnia and in his other books. These same qualities can be seen in Lewis' life. The magical touch that people find pulling them to Lewis' work (and in connection with this paper especially to the Narnia books) is due to a combination of factors but primarily due to the type of man Lewis was and the type of life that he led, as well as to his literary style. If we are to understand any of his work and its value and its attraction, we must know something about Lewis--the man, the theologian, and the writer. It would be impossible to understand in the most complete way the Narnia books (or any of his works) without a knowledge and an understanding of C. S. Lewis.

Clive Staples Lewis was born on November 29, 1898, in Belfast, Ireland, to Albert James Lewis, a middle-class solicitor, and Flora Hamilton Lewis, the daughter of a clergyman. His father was of Welsh stock, which, by tradition, is passionately moody with a tendency to be morbid. His father reflected this tendency in his stubborn, moody, and vague nature. The Hamilton stock was a happier temperament, a cooler and calmer nature, and a more critical mind. These two strains were combined in Clive (who, as soon as he could talk, renamed himself Jack) and in his older brother, named Warren, and

continued to influence their home life and their upbringing. The two brothers, separated by three years, were always very close. It was a closeness created by the isolation of their childhood. They were forced by the bad Irish weather and by a lack of playmates to create their own good times. The two boys invented stories, which they illustrated, of an imaginary world called Boxen.

The death of Flora Lewis in 1908 changed the life of the Lewis family drastically. With her went "all settled happiness, all that was tranquil and reliable."² Nine-year old Jack prayed to God to make his mother well, but when his request was denied, he began to lose faith in God. His wife's death intensified the elder Lewis' morbidness and moodiness and widened the gulf between father and sons, a gulf which had already been created by the father's pre-occupation with business. The death of their mother and their tense relationship with their father made the brothers draw even closer together. Neither of the brothers would ever be close to their father. Although there was never an overt break, the relationship would always be strained and would always be on the surface until the elder Lewis died in

²C. S. Lewis, Surprised by Joy, (New York, 1955), p. 21.

1929. In the early years the relationship was one where the boys were very afraid of their father. An example of this fear is the fact that Jack, although an atheist, was confirmed in the Church of England and took communion because he was afraid to tell his father his true feelings.

After his brother went away to school, Jack was especially lonely and spent more and more time in his imaginary world and with his books, especially the folk tales of the North which he had discovered and by which he was fascinated. At ten, Jack was sent to a school in England (which in Surprised by Joy he called Belsen). He did not stay there long, and at twelve he was sent to Campbell College in Ireland. Sickness prevented him from continuing there and the next year he went with his brother to Malvern (which he called Chartres). At Malvern, Lewis lost his faith. At fifteen, he won a scholarship to Malvern College (in the same town as the school) but he hated the college so much that his father allowed him to leave Malvern to study under W. T. Kirkpatrick, a family friend, at his home south of London.

While Lewis was at Malvern he had lost what little faith he had had and became an atheist. He was influenced in this decision by: 1) the spiritualism of a school matron; 2) the irreconcilability of the pain and suffering in the world with the idea of a good, loving, and all-powerful God; 3) the

falseness of the Greek and Latin gods which meant that the Christian God was also false; 4) a hatred of authority and interference in his life which he felt was Christianity; and 5) a pessimistic view of man and of the world. Under Kirkpatrick, an atheist, Lewis' atheism was strengthened and enforced by the "logical methods of reasoning" of Kirkpatrick's rational atheism. After studying with Kirkpatrick, Lewis won a scholarship to University College at Oxford. He was able to attend Oxford for only one term before he went into the army. After he was wounded and discharged in January 1919, he returned to Oxford to continue his studies towards his Masters of Arts degree in English Literature and Language. In 1925 he was appointed a fellow of Magdalen College at Oxford where he would remain until 1954. Lewis' work at Oxford as a scholar was of significance. One of his special fields of interest was ancient literature with a stress on the content and the work itself. His most noted academic work is The Allegory of Love, a study of the medieval tradition of courtly love as it developed out of eleventh century France and of the development of the allegorical form as a way of writing about love. Lewis also did extensive work on the literature of the sixteenth century in England. After 1939 he took part in a group known as the "Inklings". This was a group of Oxford scholars and writers who met weekly to discuss

what each of the men was currently writing. The group included Charles Williams and J. R. R. Tolkien. These men were all friends and were influential in the development of Lewis' thought and style. In 1954 he went to Magdalene College at Cambridge to occupy the newly created chair of Medieval and Renaissance English.

In 1957 he married Joy Davidman Gresham, an American woman he had known for some years. She had been brought up as a Jew, had become an atheist, and had been converted to Christianity partially through the influence of Lewis' writings. Her marriage to William Gresham had ended and she had gone to England, where she met Lewis and assisted him in his work. She was a lively and intelligent woman who had written a book on Christian ethics (Smoke on the Mountain) and was as committed to orthodox Christianity as Lewis was. Although she had been told that she had terminal cancer, she and Lewis were married. After the marriage she had a period of recovery for several years and was able to lead a fairly normal life. The marriage seems to have been a very happy one which meant a great deal to Lewis. Her recovery was not a permanent one and she died on July 13, 1960, at forty-five years of age. Her two sons by her first marriage were left to Lewis' guardianship. Lewis recorded his sorrow at her death in a journal later published as A Grief Observed. After her

death Lewis' own health began to fail. In July 1963 he resigned his position at Cambridge because of poor health. In the fall of that year he suffered a heart attack and died at his home in Oxfordshire on November twenty-second.

Lewis' life after 1925 was of significance in several areas. The most basic of these, because it shaped his entire life, was his return to theism. His belief in a personal God, and from that to a belief in the Incarnate Christ, became the center and ruling force of his life. Lewis later wrote that as an atheist he was:

. . . living, like so many Atheists or Anti-Atheists, in a whirl of contradictions. I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existng. I was equally angry with Him for creating a world.³

Atheism left Lewis unsatisfied both intellectually and emotionally and he was unwillingly forced by reason and logic to a belief in a personal God. Lewis first came to a belief, due to Bergson's philosophy of necessary existence, in an impersonal Absolute--a spirit with which man longed to be united. Many people and books influenced Lewis' return to theism. Lewis wrote that "A young man who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful of his reading. There are traps everywhere . . ."⁴ George MacDonald's Phantastes was

³Ibid., p. 115.

⁴Ibid., p. 191.

of special significance to Lewis. He came to feel that Absolute Idealism was the truth but also felt, at this stage of his life, that Christianity showed men some of the truth of this Absolute Idealism. Christianity, because of this, was better than no belief at all. Lewis was finally forced to reject the idea of a Spirit who did not know about or care about Lewis in a personal way. In 1929 Lewis had to take a "leap" into faith and accept the existence of a personal and concerned God, a God who created man and was concerned about him.

Lewis was not happy about his return to theism. He was not yet a Christian, although he did go to Church and daily Chapel. He was "antiecclesiastical" and found the "idea of Churchmanship . . . unattractive." He attended Church because he felt that he should do something symbolic to show where he now stood.⁵ Lewis never felt that this period of going to church was influential in his eventual acceptance of Christianity. Lewis sought a way to worship God in the most mature way and in the way that contained the most truth. One's religion should be based on intellect, conscience, and emotion. Lewis' background in literary criticism made him view the Gospels as true. They did not have the "Mythical taste".⁶

⁵op. cit., pp. 223-234.

⁶op. cit., p. 236.

Lewis' Christian friends also influenced him towards a belief in the Incarnate Jesus and in 1930, due both to reason and his emotions, he accepted Christianity. Lewis wrote of his spiritual struggles and his return to Christianity in 1933 in the allegorical book, The Pilgrim's Regress.

Lewis is best known by most people for the books he wrote to defend or explain Christianity. His apologetic Christian books and his books of imagination and fantasy, both of which have been so popular that they have sold into the millions, have been published in paperback editions and in other languages. His popularity as a Christian apologist and writer is due to several factors. He "was a layman writing for laymen"⁷ who wrote in terms that the average man could understand about things that were of vital concern to the average man. He purposely avoided theological terms and words. Kilby says that it is this "avoidance of technically theological language" that "has made him spiritually thrilling to thousands of people around the world".⁸ Lewis was not afraid to ask, and to try to answer, questions that most

⁷Harvey H. Kruener, "A Tribute to C. S. Lewis," Religion in Life, XXXIV, (Summer, 1965), p. 452.

⁸Clyde S. Kilby, The Christian World of C. S. Lewis, Appleford, Abingdon, Berks, 1965), p. 14.

theologians and clergy were afraid to ask or could only answer in very technical words.⁹ He was not writing to clergy or to theologians or to anyone who was well trained in Church History, Bible, or Theology, but he was writing to the average man. His simple and directly honest approach is partly responsible for Lewis' popularity and his impact on people and their lives.

It is felt even by people who are highly critical of Lewis' theology (such as Pittenger) that he did help to make religious issues "a vital concern for the thoughtful reading public."¹⁰ Pittenger also admits that many people owe to Lewis the fact that Christianity became "a live option" for them.¹¹ Lewis' importance in the lives of People and his influence on their faith is a fact that cannot be denied even by people who dislike his theological rigidity and conservatism. Kilby points out in his defense of Lewis that Lewis has done a great deal "to clear the theological atmosphere of our time and to create a deep interest in Christian things."¹²

A large part of Lewis' popularity (and therefore his

⁹Kruener, op. cit., p. 452.

¹⁰W. N. Pittenger, "Apologist versus Apologist", The Christian Century, LXXV, (October 1, 1958), p. 1104.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Clyde S. Kilby, "C. S. Lewis and His Critics", Christianity Today, Vol. III, No. 5, p. 13.

influence) is due to his literary style and method, to his way with words, and to his imagination. Kruener wrote that:

. . . Lewis was never original; he said little more than most conservative theologians might have said. But he had a bag full of tricks. He was sophisticated, urbane. He had a sense of humor . . . He had a sanctified imagination . . . and could make old things sound fascinatingly new.¹³

In addition to his imaginative way with words and ideas, Lewis' writing style was characterized by simplicity, smoothness, logical consistency, and many analogies for theological ideas. These characteristics also have helped to make him readable and popular.

Lewis' theological ideas find clear expression in his literature. His faith is the connecting theme of all his works whether the form is the science fiction of Perelandra, (which he considered his best book), the obviously Christian apologetics of his book Miracles, or the children's books of Narnia, Lewis' faith rested on a few basic premises. His most basic idea is the importance to faith of reason. It is reason that leads men to discover God and Christ. Christianity must be, Lewis felt, accepted on the basis of reason and logic as well as emotions. Man must be convinced of the rational

¹³Kruener, op. cit., p. 452.

truth of Christianity before he accepts it. Reason and faith are not opposed to each other and faith cannot exist without reason. Reason leads men to see the reality and truth of Christianity.

Lewis' belief in the existence of God was the center of his life and faith. God is both powerful and just. Man owes his allegiance to God even if God should become powerless. Man must worship God because He is God, not to gain something from God out of fear. Man must keep his faith in God, although it is normal to have periods of doubt. Man must always try to do God's will and must surrender himself completely to God. Man must admit that he is sinful and to blame for the sorrows of life and the world. All men are sinful and their most basic sin is to love selfishly--without first loving God. All of man's loves must spring from a love of God. Love is only right when it first looks to God. Man has been given free will and there is a time when he must make a choice that will determine his destiny. Lewis believed in a heaven and a hell and that each person would go to one of the two places. Walter Hooper, Lewis' companion in his last year, writes that the "central premise of all Lewis' theological works . . . is that all men are immortal."¹⁴

¹⁴ C. S. Lewis, Walter Hooper (ed.), Christian Reflections, (London, 1967), p. vii.

Lewis believed that Jesus Christ was both fully human and fully divine. God came to earth as Jesus to restore a harmonious relationship between men and Himself. He also came to atone for man's sins. Lewis believed in the Trinity but did not write much about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who is very difficult for man to comprehend and to describe, has the purpose of leading man to Christ.¹⁵ Lewis did not view Christ as "past" but had a view of Christ as an immediate reality in his life.

Another major aspect of Lewis' theology is his belief in the universal struggle between the forces of good and evil. Man's free will has led to the corruption of the perfect world and has caused this struggle. Lewis seemed to believe that these forces of evil that are at work in the world are led by a real being, a being that men would call the Devil. Some of his science fiction indicates that perhaps the evil forces were once good forces that became corrupt. Lewis also believed in the existence of angels but he did not feel that their nature corresponded to any of the literary or artistic ways of picturing them. Man had to make a choice in this struggle of good and evil, a choice that would influence his eternal condition.

Lewis saw sin as anything that separated man from God.

¹⁵Walsh, op. cit., p. 79.

Self-centeredness is the basis of all sins. Lewis seems to indicate that the sins of the spirit are more deadly than the sins of the flesh. He felt that one's way of life could not be separated from one's religion.

Lewis was conservative in the theology that he expressed in his literature, but there was something in his literature that was new. The newness was in his approach and in his style. It was this newness that helped to create a magical touch that pulled men to his books. We can especially see this magical touch in Lewis' books for children. With some understanding of fairy tales as a form of literature and of Lewis' life and thought, we can now begin a study of the Narnia Chronicles and of their magic.

CHAPTER III

MAGIC OF NARNIA

As we study the Narnian Chronicles and their magic, there seem to be two main questions. The first of these questions concerns their value as literature--fantastic literature, children's literature, and general literature. The second of these questions concerns their value as Christian theology. To answer the first of these questions, we will have to decide what type of literature these books are and what their place is in literature today. To answer the second of these questions, we will have to consider the theological meaning of these specific books, as well as their place in theology today.

Before we can fairly consider either of these questions, we must know some general facts and some of the basic background of the Narnian Chronicles. Lewis published the first of the stories, The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe, in 1950. After that, each year for six years, he produced another story of Narnia until 1956 when the final book of the series, The Last Battle, appeared. This final book won the Carnegie Medal as the best children's book of the year. The seven books have already become classics of children's literature

and have a growing popularity with adults. They are respected and loved as children's stories as well as religious stories. Walter Hooper, Lewis' secretary and friend (and currently one of the experts on Lewis and his work) has recently written that: "If asked which of Lewis' books I thought most likely to become immortals, I should say the 'Narnian Chronicles'".¹ Lewis' critic, W. N. Pittenger, has admitted that "The Narnian tales, intended for children, are altogether charming; they are loved by children and they are delightful reading for adults."² It has also been written that:

It may be that the "Chronicles of Narnia" may outlive The Allegory of Love, and Perelandra outlive - them both. Few works of learning and criticism survive a hundred years . . . but a piece of genuine imagination in fiction may have a long life.³

It seems to be obvious that most scholars and theologians would both agree that the Narnian Chronicles are both significant and delightful works of literature. That these books have a magic appeal is certain, but the question arises about the nature and source of this magic. Part of this magic is

¹Walter Hooper, "C. S. Lewis", The Franciscan, IX, (September, 1967), p. 173.

²W. N. Pittenger, "Apologist versus Apologist", The Christian Century, LXXV, (October, 1958), p. 1104.

³Nevill Coghill, "The Approach to English", Light on C. S. Lewis (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1965), p. 65.

due to Lewis himself and what he felt about these books.

Lewis felt that the Narnia books were fairy tales and wrote these stories as fairy tales "because this form with all its limitations was the best form" for his purposes.⁴ He did not ask what children wanted and then try to write to please them but wrote as he did "because the fairy tale was the genre best fitted for what I wanted to say".⁵ He wrote stories that he would have liked to read. For Lewis, the very limitations of writing a fairy tale for children became an attraction in "its brevity, its severe restraints on description, its flexible traditionalism, its inflexible hostility to all analysis, digression, reflections and 'gas'". The "limitations of vocabulary" of a book for children also became an attraction for Lewis.⁶ All the force of the story in a fairy tale has to be in what is said and done. In a fairy tale, one is not able to use extra words to explain or describe things, people, and events. Actions, people, and words, must speak for themselves.

Lewis wrote his books of Narnia because he was unable to ignore certain pictures that he had in his mind. He did

⁴C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds--Essays and Stories (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966), p. 37.

⁵W. H. Lewis (ed.), Letters of C. S. Lewis (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), p. 260.

⁶C. S. Lewis, op. cit., p. 37.

not sit down to write a Christian story or teach a lesson in morality or theology. Lewis said that he would see pictures gradually take shape as a story. Lewis wrote that the "images always come first."⁷ For Lewis, Narnia "all began with a picture."⁸

It is impossible to explain the way that man's imagination works. It is a very "mysterious thing."⁹ Lewis points out that for him in creating the Narnia books:

Everything began with images; a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion. At first there wasn't even anything Christian about them; that element pushed itself in of its own accord.¹⁰

In another place, Lewis wrote that:

The Lion all began with a picture of a Faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood. This picture had been in my mind since I was about sixteen. Then one day when I was about forty, I said to myself: "Let's try to make a story about it."

At first I had very little idea how the story would go. But then suddenly Aslan came bounding into it. I think I had been having a good many dreams of lions about that time. Apart from that, I don't know where the Lion came from or why He came. But once He was there He pulled the whole story together, and soon He pulled the six other Narnian stories in after Him.¹¹

⁷C. S. Lewis, op. cit., p. 33.

⁸C. S. Lewis, op. cit., p. 42.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰C. S. Lewis, op. cit., p. 36.

¹¹C. S. Lewis, op. cit., p. 42.

In other words. Lewis did not really know where he got the ideas and the images that went into the creation of Narnia. As the images began to fit together into a story, Lewis saw that they did not demand either love interests or psychological reasoning. The fairy tale form of literature was the form that did not require either of these interests. He wanted to use the fairy tale method because he could then use many of the things that he liked best, things that are natural to a fairy story, things such as "magic, talking animals, a group of friends have adventures, the over-riding moral sense, danger and the courage to face it . . ."¹²

Lewis wrote each story as the images came to him. He wrote without a plan as to how the books would develop or fit together. In his writing he had no outline of what would happen next or had already happened in Narnian history. His story of the creation of Narnia was one of the last of the Chronicles to be written and must have been an effort to explain the history and origin of Narnia and her magic. As the books developed, he attempted to tie them together and to explain the course of events. He was largely successful in doing this, but his original method of writing is responsible for many of the inconsistencies in dates, names, spellings, and events in the general history of Narnia as presented in

¹²Stella Gibbons, "Imaginative Writing", Light on Lewis (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1965), p. 99.

the Chronicles.

As the images of the faun and the lion began to take the shape of stories in Lewis' mind, he began to recognize "the possibility of putting into his stories Christian elements which in his youth paralysed much of his religion because of their 'stained-glass and Sunday school associations'."¹³ Lewis seemed to feel that by putting Christian ideas and facts in an imaginary world, where they would be free of all of the bad connotations of the Church and traditional Christianity, the truth of Christianity might "for the first time appear in their real potency."¹⁴ He wrote that he was coming to see how fairy tales and fantastic stories of other worlds

could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation to feel can freeze feelings. And reverence itself did harm.¹⁵

Lewis saw that fairy tales with Christian meaning would take people "off their guard". He wanted to take people "off

¹³Walter Hooper, op. cit., p. 173.

¹⁴C. S. Lewis, op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁵Ibid.

their guard" because he knew that often "In reading the real story ~~that~~ fatal knowledge that one ought to feel in a certain way often inhibits the feeling."¹⁶ If man is told he must believe something, the chances are that he will not believe it. Perhaps we can say, in the simplest terms, "that two purposes guided Lewis in the writing of his Narnia stories. One was to tell a good tale, the other to suggest analogies. . . of the Christian scheme of things."¹⁷

To be able to fully understand the value of these stories as both literature and theology, we should have some idea of the plot and of the action of each of the seven stories. It is true that the role of the plot and of the actions is especially important in children's books since the actions and stories must stand alone without explanations or justifications. Because of this, it has seemed wise to include some sort of a brief summary of the events of each of the seven books.

The first of the books to be published was The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, although The Magician's Nephew tells of the creation of Narnia and is by that standard the first Chronicle of Narnia. In The Magician's Nephew, Digory Kirke

¹⁶Clyde S. Kilby, The Christian World of C. S. Lewis (Appleford, Abingdon, Berks: Marcham Manor Press, 1965), p. 136.

¹⁷Clyde S. Kilby, op. cit., p. 133.

and Polly Plummer are tricked by Digory's Uncle Andrew, who is experimenting with magic rings, into going through magic pools into the "Woods between the Worlds" and from there going into different worlds. One of the worlds that the children visit is Charn, a world that was coming to its death. In this world, the children meet the wicked Queen Jadis. The Children, by using their magic rings, get back to London. There they discover that they have brought Jadis with them. Digory and Polly grab her and return with her, a cab driver and his horse, and Uncle Andrew to the "Woods" and then to the world of "Nothing". Here they see that a huge, golden lion is creating a new world with all sorts of creatures such as fauns, talking trees and talking animals. Aslan, the lion, explains that Digory and Polly, by bringing Jadis with them, have brought evil into the new world of Narnia. Aslan promises the animals that he will take all of the evil on himself that he can and that he will find a way of keeping Jadis out of Narnia for many years. Digory is sent by Aslan to the Western Wilds to get the fruit of a certain tree so that Aslan can plant, from its seeds, a special tree that will protect Narnia for many years from Jadis and her evil power. Digory, when he gets to the Western Wilds, is tempted by Jadis and her evil powers, but he returns to Aslan with the apple. Aslan plants the seeds and a new tree, with golden

leaves and an apple for Digory to take to his sick mother, grows immediately. As long as the tree lives, Jadis must stay away from Narnia. The cabbie and his wife, who was brought to join her husband by Aslan's magic, are crowned king and queen of Narnia. It is said that only sons and daughters of Adam can rule as kings and queens in Narnia. Digory and Polly return to their world. The magic apple cures Digory's mother and Digory plants its core in the yard. Years later, Digory makes a wardrobe from that tree and puts it in the country house where he lives. It is through this wardrobe that, sixty years later, the Pevensie children get to Narnia.

In The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, the Pevensie children, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy, go through the back of old Professor Kirke's wardrobe into Narnia. They quickly encounter the evil doings of Jadis, the White Witch, who has kept Narnia in winter for many years (a winter where Christmas never comes) and has oppressed the talking animals and trees and the dwarfs of Old Narnia. She is assisted by her evil henchmen, such as the ghouls, boggles, hags, and werewolves. Jadis has not yet succeeded in turning all loyal Narnians into stone. The children are aided by such friends as the talking beavers and Tumnus, the Faun (whom Lucy had met as he carried an umbrella and some parcels in the snowy

woods) in going to meet Aslan, who had returned to Narnia bringing Christmas and Spring with him. Aslan meets the children (except Edmund, who is now a prisoner of the White Witch) and tells them that they are to reign as kings and queens over Narnia and that the White Witch will be killed. Jadis arrives at the Stone Table where the Lion and the children are located. She is planning to kill Edmund, who, as a traitor must die according to the laws of the "Deep Magic." Aslan offers to die in his place. He is cruelly killed on the Stone Table, which splits in two pieces at his death. But with the morning, Aslan is again alive because of a magic that is more ancient and much deeper than the "Deep Magic" that Jadis had used to kill him. He goes to Jadis' palace and after bringing the stone animals back to life, he leads them into battle with Jadis. Her troops are defeated and she is slain by Aslan. The children are crowned at Cair Paravel with Peter as the High King, and they reign for many years as good and beloved kings and queens.

During their reign, the story of The Horse and His Boy takes place, putting it next in chronological order, although it is one of the last of the books to be published. This is the only one of the Narnian Chronicles that does not involve the magic journeys from our world into the world of Narnia and the only story that has no reference to the existence of other

worlds. The adventure story itself is primarily concerned with the travels of Shasta and Aravis (and of their talking horses, Bree and Hwin) as they try to escape from Calormen to Archenland. Aslan is present as their unknown protector and to make sure that things happen as they should happen in his plans for Narnia.

Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy, finally, at the end of The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe, return to their own world where they discover that no time has past since they left for Narnia. They realize that Narnia time must be different from their own system of time. Professor Kirke more or less promises them that they will someday return to Narnia.

Prince Caspian takes place a year later by earthly time but many centuries later by Narnian time. It is the story of the Pevensie children and their return to Narnia. As the four children are returning to school, they suddenly find themselves being magically pulled off the railroad station platform into Narnia. In Narnia, they learn the story of Prince Caspian (a "son of Adam" and a descendant of the Telamrians) whose wicked uncle, Miraz, has taken over the throne of Narnia which rightfully belongs to Caspian. Caspian has fled from his uncle and is being helped by the talking animals of Old Narnia, who have been in hiding, in

his fight for his crown. Battles are fought and the Old Narnians are in serious danger. Caspian blows the ancient horn of Queen Susan, which, by tradition, is supposed to bring help from Aslan. It was this blow on the horn that brought the children off the Station platform. The children, as kings and queens once more, try to get to Caspian to help him. Lucy sees Aslan and wants to follow him, but no one believes that she really saw him. They get lost by following the wrong path for quite a distance. During the night, Lucy awakens to discover that Aslan is there. She wakes her companions and convinces them to follow her and by morning they arrive at Aslan's How (the site of the ancient Stone Table) where Caspian and his followers are camped. Peter challenges Miraz to single combat. Things are going against Peter and Caspian until the trees begin to advance and the followers of Miraz flee. Caspian is crowned king and the children are returned to the railroad station by Aslan's power.

Another ear~~th~~year passes (three years by Narnian time) before Lucy and Edmund, with their cousin Eustace, return to Narnia. Peter and Susan had been told by Aslan that they were too old to return again to Narnia. In The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, the three children find themselves drawn into Narnia through a picture of a ship. The children find themselves on

Caspian's ship, the ship of the picture, on which he is seeking to discover the seven lost friends of his father. Reepicheep is along on the ship because he wants to find Aslan's country and to go to the "utter East." The voyagers encounter many adventures. The most interesting of these is when Eustace becomes a dragon in his physical body while his mind is unchanged. As a dragon, Eustace sees what a nasty snob he had been and he wants to be different. He is changed back to his human form when Aslan rips off his dragon skin and dips him into healing water. The party then continues, with ~~a~~ much-changed Eustace, to sail eastward. They have many more adventures and slowly discover the fates of the seven lost lords. As they travel eastward the salt water becomes sweet, the sun becomes much bigger than its normal size, the old sailors get younger, and all the people on the Dawn Treader experience a joy and a peace they have never known before. The three children and Reepicheep set out on their own when the water becomes too shallow for the Dawn Treader. Reepicheep soon sets out on his own to get to Aslan's country and the "utter East." The children meet Aslan who tells Edmund and Lucy that they are now too old to return to Narnia but that they will meet him in their own world.

Eustace returns to Narnia with Jill, a classmate from the

Experimental School that they both hate, in the book called The Silver Chair. The two children go through a door in the school wall and find themselves in Narnia. King Caspian is now an old man whose son, Prince Rilian, is missing. Aslan tells Jill and Eustace that it is their job to find and save Prince Rilian. He gives them instructions as to how they are to find the prince. Glimfeather, the owl, takes the children to the Marshwiggle, called Puddleglum, who will go with them on their journey northward to find the prince. They eventually find the prince in the underworld where he is held captive by a beautiful but wicked queen. He, not knowing who he is or what has happened, is held by her evil power for twenty-three hours a day. The children and Puddleglum manage to release him from the spell during the one hour a day that he is sane. The wicked queen, in her anger, turns herself into a snake. As a snake, her head is cut off by the prince. The children, Puddleglum, and Rilian travel up from the underworld freeing that world from the queen's power as they go on their way to Narnia. Before Eustace and Jill are sent back to their world, Aslan lets them see Caspian's resurrection to a new and joyful existence after his death.

The final book of the Narnian Chronicles, The Last Battle, deals with the end of Narnia. It is "perhaps in one

respect the most unusual children's book ever written, for in it we have the death of the principal characters."¹⁸ The story opens when Shift, an ape, gets Puzzle, a donkey, to wear an old lion's skin that he found in the river. The other animals believe that the disguised donkey is Aslan. Shift takes advantage of this belief to gain control over the animals. Disaster follows disaster and King Tirian prays to Aslan for help. Eustace and Jill appear and rescue Tirian, who was being held captive. Jill and Eustace also discover the ape's plans and get possession of Puzzle. A huge battle develops in front of the stable where Shift had kept the donkey in hiding. As the people go through the stable door to discover the mystery that is in there, they find Aslan with the Seven Kings and Queens (Peter, Edmund, Lucy, Digory, Polly, Eustace and Jill). Aslan then begins to bring an end to the world of Narnia, the world that he had created. He calls down the stars and calls up the various creatures to face him. Those creatures who look at Aslan and hate him disappear into the blackness. Those who love him come with joy into the stable. The children begin to realize that they are dead but they are with Aslan so they are happy. They realize that they are alive after death. Aslan leads them "further up and further in" into a more and more joyful land as they discover a Narnia that is more real and meaningful

¹⁸Clyde S. Kilby, op. cit., p. 133.

than the one that they have just seen destroyed. Their real joy comes when Aslan promises them that they will never again have to leave him, that they will always be with him.

Narnia is actually only one country in the whole world that Lewis created. This world takes account of other worlds and contains other countries, such as Archenland, as well as Narnia.¹⁹ Narnia is one of the smaller countries in this world of both good and bad nations. It was not nearly as strong as some of its powerful neighbors. Narnia is:

a land of heather and thyme and of sweet air, of rivers and plashing glens, of mossy caves and great forests filled with the noise of dwarfs' smithies. It was a land of freedom, where maidens were never forced to marry against their will, and where even a mouse like Bepicheep had a great sense of honor and chivalry.²⁰

Narnia is bordered on the south by Archenland. South of Archenland, beyond a desert, is Calormen, a large and aggressive country. The mountains of the Western Wilds were to the west of Narnia. Cair Paravel, the capital of Narnia, is on the east coast by the River of Narnia which flows from the Western Wilds through the country to the sea. To the north are Ettismore, some mountains, and Harfang where the giants live. To the east is the ocean with its many islands

¹⁹Walter Hooper, op. cit., p. 174.

²⁰Clyde S. Kilby, op. cit., p. 121.

and their beckoning adventures. At the far end of the ocean are said to be Aslan's country, the end of the world, and the "utter East."

Narnia is not a "land of men at all but of talking beasts, walking trees, fauns, dwarfs, and giants."²¹ In spite of that fact, the only rightful kings and queens of Narnia are men and women, the "sons and daughters of Adam." Aslan, in speaking to Caspian, says that "you could be no true King of Narnia unless, like the Kings of old, you were a son of Adam and came from the world of Adam's sons."²² Narnia "is the country of Aslan, the country of the Walking Trees and Visible Naiads, of Fauns and Satyrs, of Swarfs and Giants, of the gods and the Centaurs, of Talking Beasts."²³ The other countries in this world do not have the talking animals and other wonders that Narnia has. Narnia is unique even in her own world.

Narnia seems to be a fairy land. There are no actual fairies there but we remember that a fairy land does not have to have fairies. It includes many other things which Narnia has, such as talking animals and giants and dwarfs. Narnia is also a place that has, and gives to others, both joy and

²¹ Clyde S. Kilby, op. cit., p. 123.

²² C. S. Lewis, Prince Caspian (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1962), p. 184.

²³ C. S. Lewis, Prince Caspian, p. 50.

sorrow. The joy that one feels when Eustace becomes a human being again or when Aslan appears is much like the joy that Tolkien maintains is the essential element of fairy land. There is violence and fear in Narnia but also hope and courage. Narnia is a definite world in itself. It is not the land of "betwixt and between". It is a land where men from our world travel and have adventures. When one goes to Narnia one is definitely cut off from their own world and in another world, a "fairy world."

Narnia is not the dream world that Wonderland is. There is no implication at all that what happens happens in a dream. The magical events of Narnia really do happen to the children. The children do not dream them. But in one sense, it is like Wonderland because it has its own logic and laws. As in fairy land, there is order and reason in Narnia. It is a "whole and consistent" world.²⁴ Things happen as the natural results of events. It is a different world than our world because animals talk and trees move but they only talk and move in accordance with the laws of Narnia.

One of the main differences between our world and the world of Narnia has to do with the element of time. The

²⁴Clyde S. Kilby, op. cit., p. 141.

children could be in Narnia for years and years but no time at all would have past when they returned to their own world. The children returned to their world after their first visit to Narnia on "the same day and the same hour of the day on which they had all gone into the wardrobe to hide."²⁵

Edmund puts this thought into words and says "You know that, however long we seemed to have lived in Narnia, when we got back through the wardrobe it seemed to have taken no time at all?" He continues by explaining "that, once youre out of Narnia, you have no idea how Narnia time is going. Why shouldn't hundreds of years have gone past in Narnia while only one year has passed for us in England?"²⁶

The problem of Narnia time is increased because the same periods of time on earth do not correspond equally to time in Narnia. There is a year of earthly time between the two visits of the four Pevensie children which corresponds to many centuries of Narnian time. There is another year between the adventures in Prince Caspian and the adventures in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, but this year corresponds to only three years of Narnian time. We can therefore conclude that we are unable to draw any corresponding chart for our time

²⁵C. S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1959), p. 170.

²⁶C. S. Lewis, Prince Caspian, p. 34.

and Narnian time. It is something that is beyond reason. But within Narnia, time does make sense and follow a logic pattern. Time proceeds at an orderly rate and is much the same as time in our world. There is a past, a present, and a future. Even the magic powers of Narnia and of Aslan can not hurry or change the time. The difference in time between the two worlds can also be seen in the fact that the entire 2,555 year history of Narnia takes place within forty-nine years of English time. The creation of Narnia corresponds to 1900 A.D. on the earthly scale of time. These figures are based on an outline of Narnian history that Lewis drew up after he had written all of the stories.²⁷

Time seems to make no difference to Aslan. He does not change or grow old with the centuries. In Prince Caspian Lucy, at her reunion with Aslan, tells Aslan that he is bigger. He answers her by saying "That is because you are older, little one," and that "every year you grow, you will find me bigger."²⁸ In other words, Aslan does not change with time but the childrens' view of him changes as they grow older. At one time in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader,

²⁷Walter Hooper, op. cit., p. 174.

²⁸C. S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, p. 124.

Lucy asks Aslan what he means by "soon". He answers that "I call all times soon".²⁹ Time was of no importance to Aslan except that he knew when the time came for the children to stay in their own world and not to return to Narnia. The children come to an age when the time has come for them "to come close to" their own world.³⁰ Aslan knew this time and told each of the children when it can come for him.

Another major difference between our world and Narnia has to do with magic and its power. Narnia is in a world where magic is the accepted law of the land. It is a world where there is a table where the place settings and English food appear when the magic word is spoken.³¹ It is a world where Aslan's Table on the "island called the World's End" is supplied with food each evening.³² In this world, there is the magic apple that cured Digory's mother. There is also the magic of Queen Susan's horn which when blown calls up help from Aslan. Lucy's bottle is another magical instrument. Lucy's bottle has "a cordial made of the juice of one of the fire-flowers that grow in the mountains of the sun" and would heal wounds and cure sickness.³³

²⁹ C. S. Lewis, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1952), p. 139.

³⁰ C. S. Lewis, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, p. 209.

³¹ C. S. Lewis, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, p. 139.

³² C. S. Lewis, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, pp. 169-184.

³³ C. S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, p. 100.

The forces in Narnia that work magic can be either good or bad, although the term magic usually means good forces working to help people. But some of the magic enchantments, such as the one cast on Prince Rilian, were evil. The same type of wicked enchantment had held Narnia in winter for many years, under the spell of the White Witch, until the Pevensie children could, with Aslan's help, break that spell. Aslan himself casts a magic spell over Rabadash in The Silver Chair saying that if he ever goes more than ten miles from Tashbaan he will be a donkey forever.³⁴

Some of the most interesting parts of the magic of Narnia are the journeys from our world to the world of Narnia and back again. Eustace says that the only way a person can get to Narnia is through magic.³⁵ There is only one time when a Narnian visits our world (Tirian's dreamlike visit in The Last Battle does not seem to have been a real visit). Caspian, in The Silver Chair, is allowed to spend five minutes in our world. He has already died and returned to Aslan's own country when he is granted this wish.

The magic travel between the worlds is possible because

³⁴C. S. Lewis, The Silver Chair (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1953), pp. 183-184.

³⁵C. S. Lewis, The Silver Chair, p. 14.

"There were many chinks or chasms between worlds in old times, but they have grown rarer."³⁶ The doorways to Narnia are only open at certain times to certain people. They are open according to the will of Aslan, the creator of that world. Professor Kirke (Digory to the people in Narnia) told the children who had just returned from Narnia for the first time "You won't get into Narnia again by that route . . . Yes, of course you'll get back to Narnia again some day. Once a King in Narnia, always a King in Narnia. But don't go trying to use the same route twice. Indeed, don't try to get there at all."³⁷

The children who go to Narnia from our world go in by different ways each time since one can only get into Narnia once by any door. Each journey has the elements of mystery and magic. The magic rings of Digory and Polly set the stage for the later journeys. They explain how the wardrobe came to be full of magic. Susan's magic horn explains the entrance of the four children into Narnia in Prince Caspian. The horn had been blown and it brought the children to the aid of Caspian. In The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, Edmund, Lucy, and Eustace find themselves pulled into Narnia through a

³⁶C. S. Lewis, Prince Caspian, p. 185.

³⁷C. S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, p. 170.

picture on the wall. It suddenly becomes real and they are on a Narnian ship. In The Silver Chair, Jill and Eustace try to get to Narnia and planned a way to do so, but it is the magic of Aslan that takes them to Narnia. Jill tries to claim credit for herself and Eustace in getting themselves to Narnia, but Aslan says that "you would not have called to me unless I had been calling you."³⁸ In other words, no one can get to Narnia without Aslan's knowledge and desire. The Last Battle begins in Narnia as none of the other books do (except The Horse and His Boy) which takes place without reference to any world). Tirian cries to Aslan for help and finds himself, for a brief moment, in our world. It is as if he is in a dream since he cannot speak. Then suddenly, after he has awakened, Jill and Eustace appear beside him through the magic of Aslan. The last book involves no return to our world, but the return journeys in the other books return the children to the place where they were when they were taken to Narnia.

One of the most appealing aspects of Narnia is that the animals can talk. We remember Tolkien's point that man desires to communicate with other living things. Tolkien feels that

³⁸C. S. Lewis, The Silver Chair, p. 28.

a fairy land with talking animals speaks to this desire. Narnia, as a land with animals that speak, answers this desire of man. In Narnia, man can communicate with beavers, horses, bears, and the brave little mice as well as with most other animals. At the creation of Narnia, Aslan touched some of the animals that had just come into being. These animals formed a silent circle around him while the other animals wandered away. A change came to the animals in the circle as

The smaller ones--the rabbits, moles and such-like--grew a good deal larger. The very big ones--you noticed it most with the elephants--grew a little smaller. Many animals sat up on their hind legs. Most put their heads on one side as if they were trying very hard to understand.³⁹

Aslan gives these animals speech by saying:

Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters.⁴⁰

Mice were not one of the animals that were given the gift of speech at the creation of Narnia. Aslan gave them speech when they freed him from the ropes that bound him to the Stone Table after he was killed by the White Witch.⁴¹

The talking animals of Narnia have definite and life-like personalities. They are not the impersonal mask-like animals,

³⁹C. S. Lewis, The Magician's Nephew (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1955), pp. 107-108.

⁴⁰C. S. Lewis, The Magician's Nephew, p. 108.

symbolizing abstract qualities such as goodness, in the fable type of animal story. Each animal in Narnia is human in the vividness of his personality. Each personality has human imperfections and faults as well as lovable and kindly qualities. There are the sleepy but gentle bears and the proud little mice who fight more bravely than anyone else, and who want to cut off their tails for the love of Reepicheep, their leader. There is Reepicheep himself who, in some ways, is one of the most memorable of all the characters of Narnia. It is written of Reepicheep that:

he was a gay and martial mouse. He wore a tiny little rapier at his side and twirled his long whiskers as if they were a moustache.⁴²

Standing on hind legs, Reepicheep:

stood about two feet high. A thin band of gold passed round its head under one ear and over the other and in this was stuck a long crimson feather. (As the Mouse's fur was very dark, almost black, the effect was bold and striking.) Its left paw rested on the hilt of a sword very nearly as long as its tail. Its balance, as it paced gravely along the swaying deck, was perfect, and its manner courtly.⁴³

Reepicheep, whose shrill voice and vain concern for the dignity of his tail keeps him from being the impersonal

⁴¹C. S. Lewis, Prince Caspian, p. 178.

⁴²C. S. Lewis, Prince Caspian, p. 73.

⁴³C. S. Lewis, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, p. 19.

animal of the fables, is "one of the great heroes of Narnia,"⁴⁴ and "the most valiant of all the Talking Beasts of Narnia."⁴⁵ Reepicheep, whose love of Aslan leads him to the end of the world, and the "utter East" of Aslan's own country, finds all he seeks in the service of Aslan.

There are other animals of Narnia that we remember with affection and joy. One of these animals is Puzzle, the donkey of The Last Battle, who loved Aslan with all his heart but was afraid to face him because:

the sight of the real Lion had made him so ashamed of all that nonsense about dressing up in a lion-skin that he did not know how to look anyone in the face.⁴⁶

Puzzle, who always meant to do good and to serve Aslan, instead caused trouble for everybody. Aslan does not blame or punish him for his acts but forgives and loves him.

Other animals that we remember are the mice, the moles, and the rabbit who feed Tirian when he is tied to a tree. There are the beavers who help the children when they first come to Narnia. There is Mrs. Beaver who feeds them before she travels with them, but would like to take her sewing machine along so that the White Witch would not hurt it.⁴⁷

⁴⁴C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1956), p. 160.

⁴⁵C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle, p. 19.

⁴⁶C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle, p. 151.

⁴⁷C. S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, pp. 94-95.

There are Bree and Hwin, the talking horses of The Horse and His Boy. Hwin is faithful to Aslan but Bree is skeptical and doubts Aslan until shown that Aslan is "a true Beast" and "a real lion."⁴⁸ There is Shift, the cruel and selfish ape, who is so much like man that he too is a person rather than an abstract and impersonal mask for the quality of evil.

Narnia is obviously a land of fantasy, a land that unfortunately does not exist for man to visit, a land where man longs to go. The stories of Narnia are stories of this fantasy world. Because of the nature of Narnia, the talking animals, elements of joy and longing, and its other-worldliness, Narnia is the Fairy land that Tolkien describes. Narnia seems to have the faerie elements of longing, escape, communication with animals, and "Joy". We can then say that Narnia is, indeed, a fairy land.

There are mythical elements to these stories in that they deal with the question of ultimate importance to man, the question that concerns his existence. But these stories of Narnia are more than myths because they have personal elements that myths lack. The reader of the Chronicles really cares what happens to the characters in the stories, suffers with them, and rejoices with them. In a myth, there

⁴⁸C. S. Lewis, The Horse and His Boy (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1954), pp. 168-169.

would not be the identification with the story on the emotional level, so we can say that the Narnia Chronicles are not myths but are fairy tales as well as general stories of fantasy.

In answering the question about the theology of the Chronicles of Narnia, we realize that Lewis' orthodox Christian theology is obvious in all of the books. His "Christian theme is ancient, fixed, and orthodox" but he presents this theme with images "from the rich world of fantasy."⁴⁹ Lewis felt that he was picturing "what God might be supposed to have done in other worlds" if other worlds existed.⁵⁰ When we read the books with Christian eyes, we see many obvious images of Christian ideas. We see important images such as the way that Reepicheep's sword falls at the end of The Voyage of the Dawn Treader as a cross.⁵¹ We see Jill's need for water in The Silver Chair as man's need for the "living waters" of God. We see the wicked queen in The Silver Chair because she turns into a snake as the same force of evil that Satan in Christianity represents.

⁴⁹ Clyde S. Kilby, op. cit., p. 141.

⁵⁰ W. H. Lewis (ed.), Letters of C. S. Lewis (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), p. 141.

⁵¹ C. S. Lewis, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, p. 206.

But above all, we see Aslan in each book as the image of Christ.

It is difficult to separate the image from the idea or theme that it represents. So it is with the Narnia stories and the image of Aslan and all that that image represents. Aslan, "the great Lion, the son of the Emperor-over-sea, the King above all High Kings in Narnia," is the major image in the Chronicles.⁵² Lewis did not mean Aslan to be allegorical but "he is an invention giving an imaginary answer to the question, 'What might Christ become like, if there really were a world like Narnia and He chose to be incarnate and die and rise again in that world as He actually has done in ours?'"⁵³ Allegorical or not, Aslan is the very symbol of all things Christian. He represents the Christian truths that survive in any world. Aslan is "the embodiment of Divine Compassion" who is both mercy and justice.⁵⁴ Aslan is the creator and lord of Narnia. He loves, protects and guides Narnia to the perfection of his plans for her. He comes to help Narnia at the moments of her greatest need. His help also involves calling up the children from another world to

⁵²C. S. Lewis, The Horse and His Boy, p. 140.

⁵³W. H. Lewis, Letters of C. S. Lewis, p. 283.

⁵⁴Walter Hooper, op. cit., p. 175.

come to Narnia's aid.

Aslan's Christian symbolism is clear. He not only created Narnia, but he lives and dies for Narnia as Christ lived and died for man. Aslan's death on the Stone Table is not an exact parallel to the Atonement and Crucifixion of Christ, but the similarities are clearly indicated. He dies to save Edmund, not all men as Christ died. But in one sense he is dying for all Narnia because he is defeating Jadis and her evil plans for Narnia. His walk alone in the woods the night before his death can be seen to somewhat liken itself to Christ's time alone in Gethsemane before His death. His death on the Stone Table, which split in two as did the curtain of the temple, has obvious Christian meaning. Aslan's return to life the next morning can only be seen as a resurrection story. As he stood "shining in the sunrise, larger than they had seen him before" the connection to the joy of the Easter morning is certain.⁵⁵ Aslan is very much alive. He can be touched and romps and plays with the children and then goes on to defeat the White Witch. From that time on, he not only comes to help Narnia when necessary, but is her ever-present (though absent from her) source of hope and love.

We encounter some problems if we try to make a systematic

⁵⁵C. S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, p. 147.

theology of the Narnia stories that compares exactly to Christian doctrine. For instance, we would have difficulty in deciding which person of the Trinity is a parallel to Aslan. Aslan seems to be, at different times, all three persons of the Trinity. After his return to life, he does not take on a form like that of the Holy Spirit but is rather just like a more wonderful Aslan. There is no real difference in nature or function of the Aslan before and the Aslan after the Stone Table. We can perhaps see that the first person of the Trinity, God the Father, is very like the Emperor-over-Sea whose son is Aslan. Aslan seems to be his agent much like the Word is God's agent in the world. Aslan created Narnia as the Word created man's world. But there is a place, at the end of The Last Battle, where Aslan seems to reveal himself as God the Father when Lewis writes that: "And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion, but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them."⁵⁶ Although we can find no exact parallel for Aslan in the Trinity because he seems to have elements of all three persons, his major role seems to be similar to that of Christ, God the Son, the second person of the Trinity.

Aslan's nature and character are interesting, especially

⁵⁶C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle, p. 165.

in the light of the image of Aslan as Christ. He is "a brighter yellow . . . bigger and more beautiful and more alarming than any lion they had ever seen."⁵⁷ He can be as fierce as when he shakes the dwarf between his jaws in Prince Caspian, as humorous as when he tickles the horse, Bree, to convince it of his real nature as a lion in A Horse and His Boy, as understanding as when he gave Digory an apple to take to cure his sick mother in The Magician's Nephew, or as gentle as when he allows Lucy to embrace him in Prince Caspian when

The great beast rolled over on his side so that Lucy fell, half sitting and half lying between his front paws. He bent forward and just touched her nose with his tongue. His warm breath came all round her.⁵⁸

He sheds light and radiating power wherever he goes and gives courage to those who are needing it. His breath makes them strong. But all people cannot see him. The implication is that one needs faith to see and hear Aslan. Uncle Andrew never hears him and sees him only as a frightening lion. Edmund sees Aslan as he is only when he has gained faith and trust, and Eustace knows Aslan only after repentance. But Lucy, who has much faith and loves Aslan deeply, sees him

⁵⁷C. S. Lewis, The Horse and His Boy, p. 168.

⁵⁸C. S. Lewis, Prince Caspian, p. 124.

often when the others do not see him.⁵⁹ Aslan will not be seen until he is ready to be seen. He is constantly with Shasta and Aravis on their journey to Archenland but they do not see him until the time is right.

Aslan is powerful as well as gentle but he is not a "Tame Lion". This idea runs throughout the books. He may be gentle and loving but he is in control of the situation and no one tells him what to do. The children love Aslan and long to be constantly with him, but the relationship is not a familiar one of friends. It is rather a relationship based on their adoration of Aslan. The actions of Aslan are unpredictable and often hard to understand. He will see that things work out but in his own way and in his own time. Aslan seems to guide all things to their proper completion. Aslan knows and plans all things, Puddleglum says:

There are no accidents. Our guide is Aslan; and he was there when the giant King caused the letters to be cut out, and he knew already all things that would come of them; including this.⁶⁰

Aslan says that the children could not get to Narnia unless he wished and planned it. It would seem that Aslan always knows what is going to happen. In The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, Aslan tells the children that Jadis will be defeated

⁵⁹C. S. Lewis, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, p. 98.

⁶⁰C. S. Lewis, The Silver Chair, p. 135.

and that they will rule in Narnia. He knows when the children are too old to return to Narnia and tells them about it. The implications here for the idea of the all-knowing and purposeful God of Christianity are clear. The doctrine of predestination seems to be indirectly implied.

In both Narnia and in the Christian world, faith is crucially important. Faith is always necessary to see Aslan as he really is, but faith in Aslan throughout all the hard times and the times of testing and doubt is very important. To forget or forsake Aslan and his instructions can only lead to trouble, as Jill, in The Silver Chair, discovered. People who call to Aslan in faith, such as Caspian and Tirian, seem to have help sent to them. Tirian has only to ask and the children appear beside him. Caspian's request is not answered (to his knowledge) and he must wait for Aslan without losing faith.

Aslan is powerful. He can work great magic but he cannot do all things that he would like to do. He can bring the children into Narnia but he can not make the dwarf in The Last Battle see things as they really are.⁶¹ He can appear magically in places but he still has to die to be able to conquer the evil of Jadis. His magic power could not defeat

⁶¹C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle, p. 134.

it. This is a comparison with the Christian view of God who does many things but who will not go against his own nature and laws, and who cannot force people to believe in him, and who cannot defeat evil without suffering.

Aslan unifies all the Chronicles of Narnia. By his nature and being, Aslan give a theological meaning to each of the stories of Narnia. The basic Christian theme takes different forms and stresses different aspects of Christian doctrine in each of the books. The Magician's Nephew deals with the creation of the world and with the origin of evil. The Atonement, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection are the significant theological themes in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. Prince Caspian deals basically with the power and presence of Aslan and less directly deals with the theme of faith and obedience. The Silver Chair has dual themes of obedience to Aslan and of man's enslavement by evil. The Horse and His Boy is less theological than the other books but does show the love and guiding protection of Aslan in the lives of men. In The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, the same theme of Aslan's guidance and protection are clearly indicated as well as Aslan's power to bring out the goodness in a person. There are also parts of this book that deal with life after death and with Aslan's own country (heaven). The Last Battle attempts to explain both eternity and the end of all things.

To do this, the book must also deal with the idea of God's judgement.

The Narnia Chronicles deal specifically with major Christian doctrines; the doctrines that meant much to Lewis' personal faith. The theme of the constant struggle of good to overcome evil is clearly seen throughout the Chronicles. The ever present theme of Aslan's love and protection is as basic to the history of Narnia as the idea of Christ's love and protection is to Lewis' theology. Lewis in these books deals imaginatively with the Christian themes so that they lose none of their Christian meaning. Christian words such as "God", "Christ", "Cross", and "Resurrection" are never mentioned. The closest that Lewis ever gets to a specific Christian image is in The Last Battle where, in speaking of the stable, Lucy says "In our world too, a Stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world."⁶² We must be careful not to see more Christian images in the Narnia stories than Lewis intended us to see in these books. To avoid this danger, it would be wise to deal only with the major and obvious images.

The apple tree and the temptation of Digory in The Magician's Nephew when Narnia is created, are clearly images for the Garden of Eden and the temptation of Adam. Narnia is created from the world of Nothing by the powerful voice

⁶²C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle, p. 128.

of Aslan as he calls all things into being. This world that Aslan created was good but man, although unintentionally, brought evil into it. The parallels with the Christian belief about creation and the origin of evil are obvious. Kilby feels that The Magician's Nephew was basically intended to "imply simply that evil is both very ancient and very real."⁶³ This book manages to convey the wonder of the creation of the world as well as the horrible reality of evil.

The problem of evil is also dealt with in most of the Narnia Chronicles, but it is the major theological theme in The Silver Chair. In this book, Prince Rilian is enslaved by evil and is unable to free himself from its power. For one brief period of each day he is sane, indicating that evil is unable to win completely. The book seems to be saying that man, with the help of Aslan, can defeat the powers of evil. The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe deals with the problem of evil as a sub-theme to Aslan's death and resurrection. Evil, which is symbolized in this book by the White Witch, can be defeated only by the suffering love of Aslan.

The Christian idea that the love of Christ, and belief in Christ, can create a new man is one of the theological themes of The Voyage of the Dawn Treader. Eustace's selfish

⁶³Clyde S. Kilby, op. cit., p. 137.

greed turns him into a dragon. As a dragon, he is able to see his own ugliness, and to realize what is important, and to repent of his sins. Only Aslan can return Eustace into his own physical form (and doing this involves pain, as Aslan rips away the dragon's skin). Eustace becomes, with Aslan's help, a new being. The implication of this story is that a man can only become a new man if he is willing to repent, to suffer, and to depend on the help of God.

The theme of obedience to the will of Aslan is dramatically seen in The Silver Chair. Jill is supposed to recite daily her instructions from Aslan to insure that she will remember the way to find Prince Rilian. She forgets to recite these rules and a great deal of trouble results from her failure. But Aslan still is victorious as he indicates that God can turn all things to good and to the fulfillment of his purposes.

These books also indicate that one's behavior is significant, that one's actions and decisions make a difference. Susan, who "is no longer a friend of Narnia" does not get to the real Narnia (heaven) because she no longer has faith in Narnia and no longer is true to Aslan.⁶⁴ Aslan's speech to Digory and Polly in The Magician's Nephew indicates that man's

⁶⁴C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle, p. 123.

world should be careful and consider its actions carefully.

He says:

Let the race of Adam and Eve take warning . . . soon, very soon, before you are an old man and an old woman, great nations in your world will be ruled by tyrants who care no more for joy and justice and mercy than the Empress Jadis. Let your world beware. That is the warning.⁶⁵

The Chronicles of Narnia do show that there is a "clear distinction between right and wrong" and through these books "One is constantly made aware of the fact that actions have consequences, and of the importance of making the right decisions--decisions that affect our immortal souls."⁶⁶

The themes of judgement, of death, and of eschatology, and of eternity are developed in The Last Battle. The children are dead but there is not sorrow but joy because they will now be with Aslan forever. Their joy is increased when they meet old friends, looking young and full of glory. They all have the feeling that they "have come home at last." Jewel, the unicorn, expresses the feeling by saying:

This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that is sometimes looked a little like this.⁶⁷

Narnia has been brought to an end by Aslan, but the real

⁶⁵C. S. Lewis, The Magician's Nephew, p. 164.

⁶⁶Walter Hooper, "C. S. Lewis", The Franciscan, IX, (September, 1967), p. 175.

⁶⁷C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle, p. 155.

Narnia is not over because:

All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia through the Door. And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream.⁶⁸

As Aslan ends the shadow world of Narnia, he calls the animals up for judgement. Lewis writes that:

The creatures came rushing on, their eyes brighter and brighter as they drew nearer and nearer to the standing Stars. But as they came right up to Aslan one or other of two things happened to each of them. They all looked straight in his face; I don't think they had any choice about that. And when some looked, the expression of the faces changed terribly--it was fear and hatred: except that, on the faces of the Talking Beasts, the fear and hatred lasted only for a fraction of a second. You could see that they suddenly ceased to be Talking Beasts. They were just ordinary animals. And all the creatures who looked at Aslan in that way swerved to their right, his left, and disappeared into his huge black shadow, which (as you have heard) streamed away to the left of the doorway. The children never saw them again. I don't know what became of them. But the others looked in the face of Aslan and loved him, though some of these were very frightened at the same time. And all these came in at the Door, in on Aslan's right.⁶⁹

After the animals have been judged, "a foaming wall of water" roared across Narnia, turning all that was left of that world to ice.⁷⁰ The basic message for Christians as the world of Narnia comes to an end is that all things end and that we will

⁶⁸C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle, p. 154.

⁶⁹C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle, p. 140.

⁷⁰C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle, p. 141.

all be judged by God. The Christian belief in life after death as a new life with God comes through to man in the story of the end of Narnia. The Christian message of eternal life with God is summed up in the closing lines of The Last Battle where it says:

we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.⁷¹

Lewis brought an end to Narnia but the magic of Narnia survives. The magic of Narnia is something of great value both as literature and theology for both children and adults. As literature, Narnia provides what a fairy tale provides: enjoyment, escape, and "Joy". As theology, the books provide Christian truths that are presented in an unusually attractive way, a way that captures the attention and affection of many people. The value of the books should be recognized but it should not be corrupted. The books should not be used to teach systematic theology or to outline Christian theology for a church school program. The books should be used as enjoyable literature, literature that will catch people

⁷¹C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle, p. 165.

off guard and teach them the truths of Christianity.

Lewis' purpose for the books is expressed in Aslan's speech about how the children came to Narnia so that they can know him in their own world. He says "This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."⁷² The real magic of the Chronicles of Narnia is that through these books man is better able to know Christ in his own life.

⁷²C. S. Lewis, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, p. 209.

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